

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims of the above-identified application as follows:

1. Canceled, without prejudice
2. Canceled, without prejudice
3. Canceled, without prejudice
4. Canceled, without prejudice
5. Canceled, without prejudice
6. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus including a storing unit for storing image data and performing an output process based on the image data stored in the storing unit, comprising a controller including:

means for designating image data stored in the storing unit, and accepting an instruction for concealment of the designated image data,

means for detecting whether or not a processing unit ~~for processing the image data which can be mounted to process the image data as an optional unit~~ is provided and an operation state thereof,

means for deciding ~~either that the concealing method is to set the instruction for concealment includes only associating the image data with authentication information to the image data in the case when~~ where it is detected that the processing unit is provided and active, ~~or and~~ for deciding that the concealing method is to encrypt the image data ~~is encrypted and associated with~~ to set authentication information in the case ~~when~~ where it is detected that the processing unit is not provided or is not active,

means for concealing the designated image data by the decided concealing method based on the accepted instruction, and means for nullifying image data which is not designated by repeatedly overwriting the data which is not designated with meaningless data whereby the undesignated image data is prevented from recurring in said storing unit in reproducible form.

7. Canceled, without prejudice

8. Canceled, without prejudice

9.(Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the controller includes means for decoding encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation based on the image data.

10. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the controller further comprises:
means for accepting authentication information;
means for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information; and
means for permitting the output process of the image data in the case when where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

11. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 9, wherein
the controller further comprises:

means for accepting ~~accepting~~ authentication information;
means for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the
accepted authentication information; and
means for permitting the output process of the image data in the case when where
the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted
authentication information.

12. Canceled, without prejudice

13. Canceled, without prejudice

14. Canceled, without prejudice

15. Canceled, without prejudice

16. Canceled, without prejudice

17. Canceled, without prejudice

Please add New Claims 18 through 21 as follows:

18. (New) An image processing apparatus including a storing unit for storing image data and performing an output process based on the image data stored in the storing unit, comprising:
 - an accepting unit for accepting an instruction for designating image data stored in the storing unit and for concealing the designated image data;
 - a detecting unit for detecting whether or not a processing unit which can be mounted to process the image data as an optional unit is provided and an operation state thereof,
 - a deciding unit for deciding either that the instruction for concealment includes only associating the image with authentication information in the case when it is detected that the processing unit is provided and active, or that the image data is to be encrypted and associated with authentication information in the case when it is detected that the processing unit is not provided or is not active,
 - a concealing unit for concealing the designated image data by the decided concealing method based on the accepted instruction, and
 - a nullifying unit for nullifying image data which is not designated by repeatedly overwriting the data which is not designated with meaningless data whereby the undesignated image data is prevented from recurring in said storage unit in reproducible form.
19. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 18, further comprising:
 - a decoding unit for decoding encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation based on the image data.

20. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 18, further comprising:
 - an accepting unit for accepting authentication information;
 - a verifying unit for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information; and
 - a permitting unit for permitting the output process of the image data in the case when the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

21. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising:
 - an accepting unit for accepting authentication information;
 - a verifying unit for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information; and
 - a permitting unit for permitting the output process of the image data in the case when the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.